

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

- 1-20. (Canceled)
21. (Previously Presented) A vacuum packaging method comprising the steps of:  
positioning a bag for sealing which presents an open end and a closed distal end, said open end defined by two adjacent, face-to-face plies and having laterally spaced apart side margins;  
forming an elongated cut line in said bag through both of said plies and proximal to said open end, said cut line extending only partially across said width leaving an uncut trim section between each end of the cut line and the adjacent side margin;  
evacuating air from the inside of the bag through said cut line; and  
sealing said bag across said entire width along a sealing area located between said cut line and said distal end,  
said cut line being of a length and orientation to define, with adjacent uncut portions of the sealed bag, a handle for carrying of the sealed bag.
22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, said forming and sealing steps being carried out by use of a combined cutting blade and heating bar.
23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 22, said combined blade and heating bar being coupled to the lid of a vacuum packaging apparatus.
24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, said forming step comprising the step of extending a cutting blade against said bag.
25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, said extending step comprising the step of inflating an air bladder operatively connected with said cutting blade.
26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, said sealing step comprising the step of extending a heating bar against said bag.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, said cut line being formed as a perforation line which may be fully opened to form said handle.

28. (Canceled)

29. (Canceled)

30. (Canceled)

31. (Canceled)

32. (Canceled)

33. (Canceled)

34. (Canceled)

35. (Canceled)

36. (Canceled)

37. (Canceled)